

I – INTRODUCTION

This publication is the 21st annual Report to the Congress on Voting Practices at the United Nations. It is submitted in compliance with Section 406 of Public Law 101-246. This law provides, in relevant part:

“The Secretary of State shall transmit to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate a full and complete annual report which assesses for the preceding calendar year, with respect to each foreign country member of the United Nations, the voting practices of the governments of such countries at the United Nations, and which evaluates General Assembly and Security Council actions and the responsiveness of those governments to United States policy on issues of special importance to the United States.”

This report reviews voting practices in the UN Security Council and General Assembly (UNGA) in calendar year 2003 and presents data in a variety of formats. All Security Council resolutions for the entire year are described, and voting on them is tabulated (Section II). The report also statistically measures the overall voting of UN Member States at the 58th General Assembly in fall 2003 in comparison with the U.S. voting record (Section III). In addition to an alphabetical listing of all countries, the report presents the voting record in a rank-ordered listing by voting coincidence percentage and geographic regions, by selected bloc groupings, and in a side-by-side comparison with the amount of U.S. aid given to each country in fiscal year 2003. It also lists and describes UNGA resolutions selected as important to U.S. interests, again with tables for regional and political groupings (Section IV). Finally, it presents all data by country (Section V).

The Security Council and the General Assembly deal with a full spectrum of issues—including threats to peace and security, terrorism, disarmament, economic and social development, humanitarian relief, and human rights—that are considered critical to U.S. interests. A country’s behavior at the United Nations is always relevant to its bilateral relationship with the United States, a point the Secretary of State routinely makes in letters of instruction to new U.S. Ambassadors. A country’s voting record in the United Nations is one dimension of its relations with the United States. Bilateral economic, strategic, and political issues are also important to U.S. interests.

SECURITY COUNCIL

In 2003 the Security Council was a major focus of U.S. attention in the United Nations in 2003. The Council was heavily engaged in efforts to resolve conflict and to manage peacekeeping missions. Much of the Council’s attention was focused on Iraq, Africa, and the Middle East. Afghanistan and international terrorism continued to be priority issues for the Council. The

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Council also took up the matter of the International Criminal Court and the ad hoc war crimes tribunals.

A key U.S. priority in the Security Council was a draft resolution on Iraq's non-compliance with past resolutions that was *not* put to a vote. Faced with Iraq's continued defiance of its disarmament obligations under Resolution 1441 (2002), the United States, the United Kingdom and Spain introduced a draft resolution in February 2003 that noted Iraq's failure to comply and the Council's warning of serious consequences. The United States pointed out that sufficient legal authority for use of force to disarm Iraq, if needed, already existed in 1441 and previous resolutions. This draft resolution was an opportunity for the Council to demonstrate unity and political will in acting to enforce its own resolutions: including 1441, a total of 17 resolutions over 12 years that the Iraqi regime defied. As a result of a veto threat from one permanent member, France, and reluctance on the part of a few other members to vote for any resolution giving Iraq an ultimatum, the sponsors decided not to call for a vote. Nonetheless, this effort was key in mobilizing support from U.S. coalition partners for military action against Iraq.

Following Coalition military action liberating Iraq, the Security Council adopted important resolutions ending most UN sanctions against Iraq, welcoming the creation of the Iraqi Governing Council and creating a UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, and providing a framework for the transfer of power and for international participation in the political and economic rebuilding of Iraq. Among the noteworthy actions taken with respect to Africa in 2003, the Council adopted a resolution that approved a small special political mission to assist with efforts to sustain a cease-fire agreement in Cote d'Ivoire. After the resignation and departure from Liberia of former President Charles Taylor, the Security Council adopted a resolution that established the UN Mission in Liberia and a resolution that modified the sanctions on Liberia to reflect the fact that Liberia had a new government in place. In addition, the Council closed peacekeeping or observation missions on the Iraq-Kuwait border, and downsized missions in Sierra Leone and East Timor. The Council extended for 12 months an International Criminal Court resolution that effectively shields UN peacekeepers who are citizens of states not party to the Rome Statute from investigation or prosecution by the Court.

The Council adopted 67 resolutions during the year and issued 30 presidential statements; the latter are consensus documents issued by the Council president on behalf of the members. Voting coincidence percentages for Security Council members were again high. Most resolutions were adopted unanimously: 63 of 67 (94 percent).

The United States was the only permanent member of the Security Council to exercise its veto power, vetoing two draft resolutions on the Middle East. The United States and France abstained on a resolution on Libya, which was adopted; there were no negative votes. Bulgaria, Germany, and the United Kingdom abstained on the two draft resolutions that the United States

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vetoed. Cameroon abstained on one of the Middle East draft resolutions. In addition, France, along with Germany and Syria, abstained on a resolution on the International Criminal Court. France, along with Germany and Mexico, abstained on a U.S.-sponsored resolution on Liberia. Syria abstained on a U.S.-cosponsored Iraq resolution and was absent for another U.S.-cosponsored resolution on Iraq. (See Section II for vote descriptions and tables of voting summaries).

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The General Assembly opened its 58th session on September 16, 2003 and held 79 Plenary sessions before recessing on December 23, 2003. It adopted 288 resolutions, more than in the past few years, but still below the 332 of 1990. The subject matter of the resolutions covered the full gamut of UN concerns: security, arms control, economic, social and humanitarian issues, human rights, budget and financial matters, and legal concerns. These resolutions that were the subject of recorded votes continued primarily to address arms control, the Middle East, and human rights.

Of the 288 resolutions adopted in Plenary, 211 (73 percent) were adopted by consensus. This figure and similar ones in recent years (78 percent in 2002, 77.7 percent in 2001, 76.0 percent in 2000, 76.9 percent in 1999, 78 percent in 1998, 75.2 percent in 1997, 72.9 percent in 1996, 76.6 percent in 1995, and 77.4 percent in 1994) illustrate the high rate of consensus in the work of the General Assembly. Combining the 211 consensus resolutions and the 78 of 81 decisions adopted by consensus, the percentage of questions adopted by consensus was 78.3 percent. (Decisions are less formal than resolutions and generally cover matters of lesser importance).

VOTING COINCIDENCE WITH THE UNITED STATES

On non-consensus issues, i.e., those on which a vote was taken, the average overall General Assembly voting coincidence of all UN members with the United States in 2003 was 25.5 percent, close to the percentage of coincidence in 2002 (31.2 percent), but down significantly from 43.0 percent in 2000 and reflecting the general downward trend since 1995, when the voting coincidence reached 50.6 percent. This decline in voting coincidence with the United States on non-consensus issues in the years since 1995 reverses the steady and dramatic increase in the years immediately following the end of the Cold War. The 50.6 percent figure in 1995 was the first time the coincidence figure had exceeded 50 percent since 1978, while the 25.5 percent coincidence in 2003 is still considerably higher than the low point of 15.4 percent in 1988.

The following table illustrates the gradual decrease in overall voting coincidence with the United States since the post-Cold War high of 50.6 percent in 1995. This decrease is reflected also in the steady drop in coincidence on the votes on human rights. On human rights issues, the voting

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coincidence in 2003 was up from the previous year. On arms control votes, the trend had been generally upward; however, that trend began to reverse itself in 2001 and continued in 2002 and 2003. Since 1995, the trend on Middle East issues has been generally downward, except in 2001 and 2002, in which the consensus went up. Consensus dropped significantly in 2003.

Voting Coincidence with U.S. in UNGA, 1995-2003

Year	Arms Control	Middle East	Human Rights	Overall Votes
2003	30.7%	16.5%	34.3%	25.5%
2002	41.9%	32.4%	23.7%	31.2%
2001	50.4%	29.0%	33.9%	31.7%
2000	66.1%	11.9%	55.7%	43.0%
1999	57.9%	22.7%	52.5%	41.8%
1998	64.0%	22.5%	62.8%	44.2%
1997	65.8%	26.2%	61.9%	46.7%
1996	62.3%	28.3%	68.3%	49.4%
1995	60.9%	35.2%	81.0%	50.6%

When consensus resolutions are factored in as votes identical to those of the United States, a much higher measure of agreement with U.S. positions is reached. This figure (80.7 percent), which more accurately reflects the work of the General Assembly, is slightly below the 85-88 percent range recorded since the statistic was first included in this report in 1993. With the inclusion of consensus resolutions, the coincidence was 83.0 percent in 2002, 85.0 percent in 2001, 87.6 percent in 2000, 86.4 percent in 1999, 88.3 percent in 1998, 87.3 percent in 1997, 87.3 percent also in 1996, 88.2 percent in 1995, 88.8 percent in 1994, and 88.3 percent in 1993. (See Section III—General Assembly—Overall Votes for additional comparisons).

The coincidence figure on votes considered important to U.S. interests (42.5 percent) is significantly higher than the percentage registered on overall votes (25.5 percent). (See Section IV—Important Votes, for a side-by-side comparison of important and overall votes for each UN member).

As in past years, Israel (89.7 percent), Palau (97.1 percent), Micronesia (82.0 percent), the Marshall Islands (78.7 percent), and the United Kingdom (57.1 percent) were among the highest in voting coincidence with the United States. Australia, France, Poland, Sao Tome and Principe, and Albania were also among the top ten countries, with Canada, Georgia, and Germany close behind.

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In general, however, 2003 saw declining voting coincidences with the United States, even among friends and allies. Most members of the Western European and Others Group (WEOG) continued to score higher than average coincidence levels with the U.S.; the average was 46.1 percent, which is down from 49.9 percent in 2002, 54.4 percent in 2001, 61.5 percent in 2000, 67.1 percent in 1999, 65.2 percent in 1998, and 70.9 percent in 1997. There has been a growing divergence between the United States and the European Union, which at 45.5 percent, is down from 49.5 percent in 2002, 53.5 percent in 2001, 62.5 percent in 2000, 68.5 percent in 1999, 66.7 percent in 1998, and 73.0 percent in 1997. The Eastern European Group's voting coincidence also declined in 2003, at an average of 38.7 percent, which is down from 43.7 percent in 2002, 48.8 percent in 2001, 58.0 percent in 2000, 61.7 percent in 1999 and 1998, and 68.6 percent in 1997 and 1996. After the latter group's meteoric rise in coincidence with the United States immediately following the dissolution of the Soviet bloc, it largely matched the coincidence level of the Western European countries before its decline in the past six years. The NATO and Nordic countries also decreased in voting coincidence with the United States, continuing to reverse the upward trend of the late 1990s. The African and Asian groups, the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Latin American and Caribbean group all declined in voting coincidence with the United States.

The following five bar graphs depict voting trends since the end of the Cold War. Voting coincidence with the United States, in terms of both overall and important votes, is broken down by year for issues, geographic groups, and political groups.

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REALIZATION OF U.S. PRIORITIES

At the 58th UN General Assembly (UNGA), the United States focused its efforts on six major goals: promoting political participation of women; rallying the world to increased action on HIV/AIDS awareness, prevention and care; reforming the Second Committee's program of work; protecting critical information infrastructures that will build on previous international efforts; banning cloning; and reforming the UN budget. The outcome of the fall session was once again mixed with regard to the realization of U.S. priorities, with significant achievements as well as some shortfalls.

Overall, the U.S. delegation joined consensus on most of the resolutions adopted, including several considered a high priority for the United States. It strongly supported consensus actions on the UN Convention Against Corruption, improving the effectiveness of the work of the First Committee, trafficking in persons, women and political participation, follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development, and implementation of the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS. In addition, the United States succeeded in electing a U.S. candidate to the Committee on Contributions.

A key U.S. goal at the UNGA was to reduce the number of one-sided resolutions concerning the Middle East; the United States accomplished this objective, as 22 resolutions in past years were reduced to 20 resolutions this year. Also, the United States came closer to its goal of achieving a consensus this year on a convention to completely ban cloning. Despite these gains, the United States continued to differ with many UN members on the situation in the Middle East, nuclear disarmament issues, and some thematic human rights issues. These differences were often reflected in lopsided vote counts on several resolutions, with the United States in the minority. Also, for the thirteenth year in a row, Cuba received broad international support for its resolution opposing the U.S. embargo on Cuba, an issue which the United States maintained did not belong before the UNGA because it is bilateral in nature.

In the First Committee (Disarmament and International Security), the United States introduced a resolution to initiate a process to modernize the Committee so that it could effectively address new threats to peace and security. At the same time, the First Committee and UNGA maintained their perennial focus on nuclear disarmament, with the United States voting nearly alone on resolutions on the elimination of nuclear weapons and the risk of nuclear proliferation in the Middle East.

Despite continued Middle East tension, the United States introduced a resolution on the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) that created a broad basis of support and contributed to a reduction of the number of one-sided resolutions in the UNGA on the Middle East. However, the United States was again in the minority in opposing most of the resolutions in the areas of Israeli practices, the status of the Occupied Territories, and the

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situation in the Middle East. The United States believes that General Assembly resolutions that deal with the Middle East question should be consistent with the principles of the performance-based Roadmap and the Madrid Peace Conference of 1991.

In the Second Committee (Economic and Financial issues), reform of its program of work was a key U.S. priority. The United States proposed that the Second Committee organize its work around the main themes of the Monterrey Consensus, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and the internationally agreed goals in the Millennium Declaration. This reform would make the work of the General Assembly's Second Committee responsive to direction received from heads of state and government at recent major UN conferences. However, the G-77 insisted that no items on the program of work be changed. On a positive note, however, the General Assembly adopted a resolution by consensus on critical information infrastructures that the United States sponsored. This resolution was a key U.S. goal in this year's UNGA.

Human rights issues continued to provoke debate in the Third Committee. The U.S. delegation was in the minority in voting against thematic resolutions on right to development, right to health, access to medications, and right to food. While emphasizing in principle its support for these issues, the United States opposed these resolutions as flawed. The United States argued that they perpetuated the concept of entitlement rather than creating an enabling environment, were inconsistent with federated states' legal systems, and were excessively costly. The United States was also in the minority in voting against a resolution on rights of the child, in part because of the resolution's support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CROC) as the international standard. The U.S. voted against a resolution on support for future operations of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) because of its excessive cost. The United States was successful in introducing and gaining the adoption by consensus of a resolution supporting education and training for women to advance their participation in the political process, as well as winning a vote on its resolution to strengthen the UN's role in enhancing the effectiveness of elections and promoting democratization. Also, the United States joined the majority in voting for resolutions addressing the poor human rights situation in several countries, including Iran and Turkmenistan.

On budget and reform issues, the United States was successful in continuing to implement reforms aimed at the efficient and effective use of resources and the ongoing implementation of results-based budgeting in all UN programs. There were some new areas of spending by the United Nations that the United States supported. However, these increases were accompanied by important and precedent-setting savings in other areas, such as the technical cooperation program and UN Information Centers. The United States felt that the new budget should reflect an ordering of priorities and should identify marginal and/or obsolete programs. The U.S. delegation was instrumental in

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securing funds for the Counter-terrorism Committee while ensuring that the 900 outputs suggested for discontinuation by the Secretary-General remained outside the Regular Budget. The United States joined consensus on the budget resolution, which set the 2004-2005 program budget at \$3.16 billion. The new budget level was approximately \$50 million less than that proposed by the Secretary-General and included important management reforms, such as expanding the Secretary-General's authority to redeploy agencies and their personnel and establishing a hiring freeze on UN vacancies, which are expected to result in ongoing efficiencies in future biennia.

On legal issues, an annual resolution on measures to eliminate international terrorism was adopted without a vote; however, negotiations on a draft comprehensive convention on international terrorism remained at an impasse. After a motion was adopted (by one vote) in the Sixth Committee to postpone for two years discussion of a cloning convention, the General Assembly, at U.S. urging, decided to postpone discussion instead by one year. The United States again objected to and did not participate in a consensus resolution on the International Criminal Court.

FORMAT AND METHODOLOGY

The format and presentation of this report are consistent with provisions of Public Law 101-246, and the methodology employed is the same as that used since the report's inception.

The tables in this report provide a measurement of the voting coincidence of UN member countries with the United States. However, readers are cautioned about interpreting voting coincidence percentages. In Section III (General Assembly Overall Votes) and Section IV (General Assembly Important Votes and Consensus Actions), the percentages in the last column of the tables, under "votes only," are calculated using only votes on which both the United States and the other country in question voted Yes or No; not included are those instances when either state abstained or was absent. Abstentions and absences are often difficult to interpret, but they make a mathematical difference, sometimes significant, in the percentage results. The inclusion of the number of abstentions and absences in the tables of this report enables the reader to consider them in calculating voting coincidence percentages.

The percentages in the second to the last column of the tables, under "including consensus," offer another perspective on General Assembly activity. These figures, by presenting the percentage of voting coincidence with the United States after including consensus resolutions as additional identical votes, more accurately reflect the extent of cooperation and agreement in the General Assembly. Since not all states are equally active at the United Nations, the report credits to each country a portion of the 211 consensus resolutions based on its participation in the 98 recorded Plenary votes. Each country's participation rate was calculated by dividing the number of Yes/No/Abstain votes it cast in the Plenary (i.e., the number of times it was

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not absent) by the total number of Plenary votes. However, this calculation assumes, for want of an attendance record, that all countries were present or absent for consensus resolutions in the same ratio as for recorded votes.

Moreover, the content of resolutions should be considered in interpreting the figures in either of the aforementioned columns. There may be overwhelming agreement with the U.S. position on a matter of less importance to the United States and less support for a resolution it considers more important. These differences are difficult to quantify and to present in two coincidence figures.

Questions about this report may be directed to the Bureau of International Organization Affairs in the Department of State.